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# NORTHWEST REGIONAL MENTAL HEALTH BOARD, INC.

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## Testimony for the Public Health Committee March 11. 2015

### In favor of the following proposed bills:

**HB 5449:** AA Prohibiting the use of electronic cigarettes in the same places where smoking is prohibited

**HB6283:** AA Regulating electronic cigarettes

**HB 6290** AA Limiting the advertising of electronic nicotine delivery systems

Good morning Sen. Gerretana, Rep. Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee.

My name is Janine Sullivan-Wiley and I am the Executive Director of the Northwest Regional Mental Health Board, Inc.

As background, the Regional Boards were **established by state statute** (Sec. 17a-484) **40 years ago this year to provide a community-based assessment, planning and oversight entity for mental health services**. Our region covers the 43 towns of Northwest Connecticut, but we always work in collaboration with other entities, assuring that we understand when the scope of an issue is local, regional or state-wide.

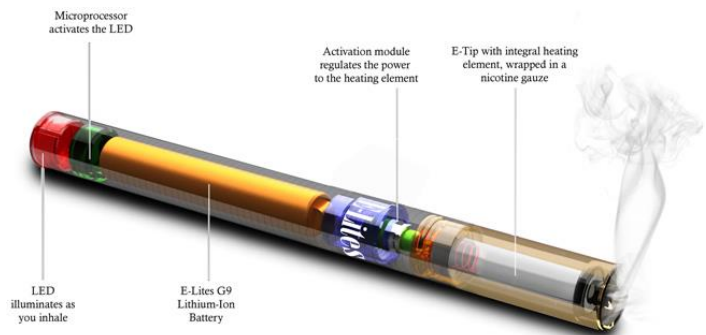
One thing that became very clear as we conducted our evaluations and needs assessments, and reviewed critical incident reports, was that the issue of smoking and its attendant mortality was of grave concern to people experiencing mental health or substance use disorders. That led us to join the Smoking Cessation Supports Initiative, a coalition of people and organizations concerned about the impact of smoking on this population, as well as its impact on all citizens.

That in turn led to our Regional Board bringing additional resources and expertise to the programs in our region, and has led in turn to a wonderful increase in expertise and programs to help people quit smoking. During this process I became trained as a Tobacco Treatment Specialist to become a better resource to clients and providers.

Which brings me to the bills under consideration today. **While smoking rates have been trending down, the use of electronic cigarettes – well described as electronic nicotine delivery devices – has been essentially recruiting people into nicotine addiction and smoking.**

**Allowing the use of e-cigarettes where other forms of smoking are prohibited can:**

- Serve as a trigger for relapse for those who have quit or are trying to quit,
- Normalize their use and the use of other tobacco products,
- Serve as a gateway for youth to nicotine addiction and tobacco use.



**Some basic facts about E-cigarettes:**

- They have NOT been proven harmless; research on their health effects is in its infancy,
- Their nicotine content varies widely,
- The vapor contains carcinogenic chemicals and other toxins,
- The number of calls to poison control centers for accidental ingestion has risen dramatically.

**Nicotine is a substance that is extremely addictive**, and one of the most difficult addictions to quit. Inhalation of nicotine is particularly effective in delivering it to the brain and forming an addiction pattern. Thus E-cigarettes – as noted a nicotine delivery device – are an excellent method to develop nicotine addiction.

**E-cigarettes pose a particular risk to youth, where the use of e-cigarettes is especially high.** 14% of those 13-17 and 39% of those 18-21 have reported using e-cigarettes. One study found that 20.3% of middle school students who used e-cigarettes had never smoked traditional cigarettes, the e-cigarettes thereby being their introduction to a dangerous and highly addictive product. **E-cigarette companies are heavily promoting their products to youth through sponsorship of youth events and through social media. They are sold with flavors such as Cherry Crush, Peachy Keen, Gummi Bear and Cotton Candy.** Between the venues for advertising and the flavors being produced, clearly youth are targeted as users.

**Anything that can reduce the ease of access and/or use of e-cigarettes is to be commended.**

**Regulations that prohibit their use wherever smoking is prohibited represent an excellent public health initiative.**



**Which makes the bills HB 5449, HB6283, and HB 6290 all excellent bills:**  
**e-cigarettes should be *at least as restricted as regular cigarettes.***

Thank you for your consideration.

I am happy to help however I can to support you in the passage of these or any similar bills.

More information on e-cigarettes is available from the following:

Action to Quit (<http://actiontoquit.org> )

Partnership for Prevention Coalition ( <http://www.prevent.org> )

Centers for Disease Control (<http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco> )

Legacy for Health (<http://www.legacyforhealth.org> )